

Southern Light Newsletter



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Merry Meet!

We are the family team of Southern Light Newsletter

We are a pagan family, living in the beautiful island state of Tasmania, Australia. We've always enjoyed reading pagan and family resources, but noticed most resources for pagans are northern hemisphere-focused. And while there are a few great resources around for those like us in the southern hemisphere, we realised there was still a space for more.

Our aim is to create content aimed at pagans and pagan families of all ages. From time to time there may be some articles that are not appropriate for the younger kids, these will have a disclaimer before the body of the article. We will do our best to convert dates to line up with the southern hemisphere (where appropriate) so that you don't have to. We welcome contributions from the community, and if we do our job right we'll be creating a newsletter that we would appreciate reading ourselves.

Please note that some of the articles in the newsletters will occasionally be making their way to our blog section (southernlightnewsletter.com/blog). We'll also be posting other content in our blog that won't exist in the newsletter, so make sure to keep up with both!

If you want to give us some feedback, contribute to the newsletter or just get in contact generally we would love to hear from you. Either contact us through the website at southernlightnewsletter.com/contact or send us an email at team@southernlightnewsletter.com

Happy reading,
The Holly and The Ivy



Editor's Note

Well we have come full circle! With our first newsletter being released last winter.

We feel we have learned a lot over this time and our journeys on our own paths have grown, as has our community. We look forward to the next 12 months as the wheel turns and to expanding our newsletter's depth and breadth through our community's contribution. Thank you for sharing this journey with us.

Within the pages of this newsletter you will find an interview with a member of the Asatru community, a discussion on the lessons of winter, a basic overview of cinnamon, an article on the colour green and its symbolism in the bleak of winter, and thoughts on pagan parenting in adulthood along with the regular seasonal recipes, crafts and entertainment.

We hope you enjoy!

A Note on Future Newsletters and Supporting Us

Enjoy our newsletter and/or blog, and maybe wanted to show us additional support as well?

Southern Light Newsletter is run entirely in the spare time of its creators, but we hope it can become a focus in our lives. So we decided that it would be primarily run through Patreon.

We've recently changed our Patreon structure so that all newsletters can be accessed digitally for free, but we still can't quite give this newsletter the attention we'd like until we get a few more patrons. With more patrons, we can devote more time to our articles, start to build a community, maybe even start creating goods such as southern-hemisphere focused pagan planners and such!

Our Patreon page can be found here: patreon.com/SouthernLightNewsletter
If you can't afford the Patreon tiers, spreading the word helps immensely too! We're easily reachable through the Contact page on our website if you want to discuss anything with us.

Much love and blessed be,
The Holly and The Ivy



Up & Coming

Pagan Holidays for the Season

Here is a brief list of holidays for the season with dates for the southern hemisphere. Please let us know if there is a pagan festival you celebrate in the southern hemisphere that is not on here.

*

June 20-July 1

Yuletide in Norse traditions. Mother's night is the first night of the 12 nights of Yuletide which ends with Yule night. Some heathens chose to dedicate the remainder of the nights to certain deities and others just the general merry making.

*

June 21-22

The winter solstice, known as Yule among those that celebrate the Wheel of the Year but celebrated by many a name depending on what path you follow.

*

July 31

Disabolt, also known as charming on the plow in Norse traditions

*

August 1-2

Imbolc on the Wheel of the Year, it is a fertility festival commonly associated with an end to the coldest part of winter and the coming of spring.

Exact date 2020 is August 7th

*

August 2

Barri, a fertility festival celebrated in Norse traditions.



The Aitar

The Colour Green

At a time of year when so many plants are asleep and leafless,
why the focus on green at Yule?



Christmas or Yule, we love to decorate our trees and houses with festive colours. Chief among the whites, reds, and other “classic” colours, is vibrant green. Yet while there are many evergreens around, there are also many plants at this time of year that have lost their green leaves and are either soaked in reds and oranges, or completely bare.

But we don’t need to look at this colour and dwell on what we *don’t* have. Instead, we can consider what’s passed over the past year, what’s to come, and what we *do* have.

Celebrating what’s passed

At the winter solstice, we can consider the colour green as representative of the deciduous plants. After a year where they’ve done their best to grow and be productive, this is now a time of year for them to rest, recover, and reflect.

We, too, can use the time around the winter solstice to rest and reflect. Celebrate your victories over the past year. However big or small, it all counts!

Celebrating what’s ahead

There are many deciduous plants which require a cold period of deep rest, otherwise they don’t produce as much over the coming year. For example, apple trees need a number of “chill hours” – hours during the winter that are below a particular temperature – to produce properly. If they don’t get these periods of deep cold, there may be fewer buds and apples produced, they may start producing at the wrong time, or they may not produce at all.

I think this is an important one we need to remember nowadays. We can be an otherwise great “producer”/worker, but if we don’t get the rest that we need (and this can look different depending on the individual), we simply won’t be able to work to our highest level.

It seems like some people feel they can do their best work without a good rest, by just constantly pushing ahead regardless of how they’re feeling. But the easiest counterargument to this is: If you feel you’re still performing well, how much better would you be on top of that with a good rest at your back!

Celebrating what we still have

With the deciduous trees having lost their leaves, it's easy to look out on a forest and see how many leaves we've lost and how different the forest looks without them. It's another thing again, to look on the forest with fresh eyes and see it for what it is now, regardless of how it used to look.

Humans are extremely good at ruminating on what we've lost in the past. How things *used* to be. We're less good at naturally thinking about what we have now, without any attachment to the past. It is, after all, why we constantly feel the need to remind ourselves to think about our present in this way – because we often need those reminders.

While fully appreciating the work that's been done over the past year, and looking forward to what's to come, it's *always* important to look around and appreciate what you have. Some trees may be empty, naught but branches and sticks – all the easier to hang things on. And despite the deciduous trees, some evergreens may still be clothed in emerald green – all the more brilliant for the lack of green around them! I believe both of these can be exquisite food for thought, if you give yourself the time to meditate on them.

A story about evergreen trees

I found the following story from www.learnreligions.com, their “Magical Colors of the Yule Season” article. It tickled me in a good way, and I wanted to share it here:

There's a wonderful legend of the winter solstice, about why evergreen trees remain green when everything else has died. The story goes that the sun decided to take a break from warming the earth, and so he went on a bit of a hiatus. Before he left, he told all the trees and plants not to worry, because he'd be back soon, when he felt rejuvenated. After the sun had been gone a while, the earth began to get chilly, and many of the trees wailed and moaned in fear that the sun would never return, crying that he had abandoned the earth. Some of them got so upset that they dropped their leaves on the ground. However, far up in the hills, above the snow line, the fir and the pine and the holly could see that the sun was indeed still out there, although he was far away.

They tried to reassure the other trees, who mostly just cried a lot and dropped more leaves. Eventually, the sun began to make his way back and the earth grew warmer. When he finally returned, he looked around and saw all the bare trees. The sun was disappointed at the lack of faith that the trees had shown, and reminded them that he had kept his promise to return. As a reward for believing in him, the sun told the fir, the pine and the holly that they would be permitted to keep their green needles and leaves all year long. However, all the other trees still shed their leaves each fall, as a reminder to them that the sun will be back again after the solstice.



(Credit: <https://www.learnreligions.com/magical-colors-of-the-yule-season-2562957>)

The Playroom

Something for the young ones

What Can Winter Teach Us



The cold time of the year. Rest, for us and for nature.

There are gifts and lessons that winter provides. One of the most obvious is that rest is important if we are to flourish and bring forth new energy. This is most obvious with winter and deciduous trees but happens regardless of where you are in the world and if you experience winter or not. For example, *all* trees rest. Evergreens don't lose their leaves but have times where they do not grow. Deciduous trees take this a step further – they actually need winter, a period of colder weather and shorter days so they will go to sleep. If they don't get this respite period then they will live only a few years before dying young rather than living their long lives.

Another gift that winter provides is *space*. There is less happening and so there is space to do less, to do things slowly, to tie up loose ends, finish projects, read. In this space and rest that winter gives us there is time to think and reflect too, maybe this is reflecting on a project and planning what to do next or reflecting on events and changes to your life and yourself in the last year and laying a foundation for changes you would like to make.

Winter provides us with these opportunities but it also has those same lessons for us both during winter and for us to carry through the year. There is a time to be busy but there is a time to rest. Slow down and allow yourself to heal and breathe and think. In this way you will once again be filled with energy, ideas and new purpose.

Breathe in the cold and slow down, let it be.

Cinnamon



Cassia Cinnamon



Ceylon Cinnamon

The spicy, warming and slightly sweet scent is well known to many people and these days is a common ingredient in kitchens though once it was a rare and highly valued trade item. There are well over 100 different species of cinnamon in the world but there are just two common ones that are sold in your average store. The more common of these is cassia cinnamon, when you see it in quills it has a very thick bark and is usually just one roll. Its flavour is more spicy and pungent and is better suited to savory dishes and teas than its harder to find sweeter and more subtle cousin Ceylon cinnamon, a.k.a “true cinnamon”, which when you see its quills is much finer and more flaky with many layers. This cinnamon is preferred when using in sweet foods.

Gathering

If you live where you can gather cinnamon then you are very lucky indeed, as it isn't a plant that grows wild in Australia or New Zealand and isn't easily cultivated in many areas of these countries. It grows in tropical to sub-tropical regions and requires moist humid conditions along with a warm, frost-free environment. The cinnamon we are accustomed to using in dishes is the inner bark from young stems. Gathering is still done by hand, cutting off stems or suckers that are about 2cm thick and then soaking them in water until the outer bark is soft. Once this has happened the outer bark is scraped off and the inner bark is carefully removed and dried in quills before being used. The other place that most of us can gather cinnamon is the shop.

Food

Cinnamon has been used for more than 4,500 years and traded for almost as long. Most people today would be familiar with it as a spice used in sweet foods, drinks, buns, cakes and breads. However it is also a wonderful addition to savory foods and pairs very well with meat, other strong flavoured foods and fruits. A household winter favourite for us is cinnamon lamb. The combination of cinnamon with the lamb, raisins and tomatoes is a delicious adventure for the mouth.

If you have access to a cinnamon tree you can cook with the leaves as well, they give a more subtle flavour. Using them for tea, putting them in stews like bay leaves (remove them before serving) and baking with them under cookies and cakes to impart flavour.

Medicine

Cinnamon has been used as a medicine for almost as long as it has been used as a spice. Its also known as a food medicine, hence is gentle and in most circumstances can be used long term without problems.

Cinnamon is very useful for helping issues with digestion including cramping, gas, and indigestion. It helps to improve circulation in general and is particularly useful if heat or cold seem to be very unevenly distributed. For this reason it can be used during for shivering and chills associated with colds and flu's.

Cinnamon has a high antioxidant content and as such is used for reducing inflammation and mild pain, particularly cramping. Cinnamon also does an amazing job at lowering blood sugar in people who have type 2 diabetes, however this should be supervised by a health care practitioner.

Honey and Cinnamon Spiced Milk

A delicious, calming and warming drink for relaxing on a cold winters day.

Ingredients:

- *½ cup of water
- *1 cup of your preferred milk,
- *1 cinnamon quill
- *1 teaspoon to 1 tablespoon of honey

Method:

1. Bring the water to the boil on the stove with the cinnamon in it. Reduce to a simmer and let simmer for 5-10mins.
2. Add the milk and gently warm to drinking temperature and remove from the heat. Stir in the honey and remove the cinnamon stick. Divide and drink.



Enjoy!

The Deck

For teens, and others who are just getting started on their pagan journey

Paganism Overview - Ásatrú



To define Ásatrú is not as easy of a task as defining Heathen. There is the literal definition deriving from Icelandic “As” meaning the Æsir, which is one of the tribes of Gods in the Northern Pantheon (more on this later). While “Tru” meaning faith and/or belief in.

In the literal definition, Ásatrú roughly translates to “Faith in the Æsir”. However, this does not encompass the breath of belief of those who consider themselves “Ásatrú”. For many who are Ásatrú (plural Asatruars), the Æsir are not the only ones in which belief and honor is applied. For many, the Vanir, Ancestors, Land Spirits, etc.. are honored as much, if not more.

The term Heathen is generally an umbrella term for those of us who follow the Northern Tradition, in any of its wide scopes. However, we can break this term down.. we have Ásatrú, Vanatru (which is belief in the Vanir), Rokkr, Forn Siðr, Theodism, Odinism, etc. All of these belief systems stem from the same Northern European/Germanic roots, and are extremely similar, if not the same in many aspects.

Ásatrú is the native folk way of Europe; how the people of Europe connected with the divine and the world around them for thousands of years. How they answered the questions that still keep us awake late at night.. Ásatrú is a polytheistic, pantheistic religion, or folk spiritual way. What this means is that we have many gods and goddesses. (This is just the tip of the iceberg!)

The core structure and beliefs of Ásatrú are formed around what we know of Norse Mythology (the tales and legends that have been passed down generation to generation since they were first formulated). These are the tales of Sigurd the Volsung, Thor the Thunderer, Odin the Wanderer, and Frejya the sorceress.

There are many different beings that populate the worlds of Norse Mythology; Gods, Dwarves, Elves, Dragons, etc. Magic and extraordinary feats are common place to these people, our gods, and our ancestors. This is the world in which Ásatrú is placed.. the worlds in which modern day

heathens draw their lessons, inspiration, and will to *LEARN*. Our beliefs, rituals, and holidays stem from these tales, legends and truths.

The above are excerpts taken from the “What is Ásatrú” page from The Ásatrú Community, here: <https://www.theasatrucommunity.org/asatru>

The Ásatrú Community is an international community (including having members here in the southern hemisphere), and we highly recommend checking out their website if you’re interested in Ásatrú and what it entails.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

For a personal view into the Ásatrú faith we got in contact with Hyde Addams, a member of the board for The Ásatrú Community (TAC) who lives in Australia. Our interview with them was as follows:

How would you describe your beliefs and/or tradition?

I guess the best way I can describe my faith is that I looked through a lot the other faiths and felt no connection. Once I came across Asatru I felt a warmth and family there. The more I learned the more I felt like this was where I belonged.

Our faith isn’t about doubting others or gate keeping ours. We believe everyone has the right to practice how they see fit, as long as it falls within the legal guidelines of your area, we would never want anyone to get in trouble with the law because “that’s what our faith states”.

And what does your belief and/or tradition entail?

Our faith can be as in depth or as simple as you make it. Some followers have their entire houses dedicated to the faith, their lives and jobs; while others have something more simple be it a shelf or table for an altar or even no altar at all so just using their energy and mental faith to follow.

I, myself, have a bookshelf in my room dedicated to my faith. One shelf, so far, is my altar to my main deity which is Heimdall, though I will be making an altar for Loki and his children as well. One shelf I have is dedicated to books about my faith to help me learn as I’m always trying to learn more and in this faith there’s always more to learn.

I also volunteer with an international group called The Asatru Community (TAC) which has helped me develop even more in my faith.

Does this fit within the wider, or more formal, Asatru framework/traditions? Or are your beliefs more eclectic in nature?

Asatru is very much eclectic within itself. There are followers who follow it to the letter while others change it to what works for them. Nothing works for everyone so it’s a very eclectic and ever changing faith.

I myself am quite eclectic, because while I follow Asatru mainly I have hints of other faiths and beliefs as well.



Do you practice magic work? If so, do you consider your magic work an integral part of your religious beliefs, or separate (if related), and why?

I do practice magic. And no it's not integral. Magic is considered part of Asatru, seidr etc, but it's not an essential practice within the faith.

I personally always learned towards magic even before I found Asatru so finding the magic within Asatru was a great surprise for me. I'm studying seidr at the moment and plan to keep learning as much as I can in all forms of magic.

Were your first spiritual beliefs in life similar, or has there been a bit of a journey to get to where you are today?

It's been a journey for me. While I gravitated more towards Greek and Egyptian books to read I never felt at home. It wasn't until I started really reading about the Nordic faith that I started to feel something more. And while I still hold Greek and Egyptian in high regard Norse is where my heart lies mostly. And it's still something I endeavour to learn about every day.

How did you come across this particular set of beliefs/tradition? For example, were you introduced to it by someone, or did one bit of research lead to another until you found yourself where you are now?

I was introduced to the Nordic faith as a proper faith by an ex. I went through life for a long time searching for meaning in something more, something that pulled at me. And while I found many that I loved nothing felt like home. He introduced it as a faith in a different concept then I'd read about and it started my journey to taking Asatru on as my main faith.

Do you practice by yourself, or as part of a group? Do you find it's easier to be solitary or part of a group?

Both. While I prefer to do the majority of my practice by myself having a group helps when you want information or just feel alone, sometimes having a faith such as ours can make you feel alone if you don't know many who follow the same faith around you.

I practiced alone and told no one for a very long time until I found TAC (The Asatru Community) they have been my saviour in a lot of ways. I now volunteer for them as the Director of the Ambassador Program and feel so at home with them. I was lucky to find them.

Is there any part of the "mundane world" that you feel is improved, or easier to deal with, through your practice?

For me everything was already extraordinary in its own way. But now I find even more magic in the world around me by actively making connections of what's around me to how it connects to the lore we have, or what gods or goddesses it connects to. Helps to keep the mind sharp with the ever growing information that is linked to our faith as well as making me feel closer to the gods as well.

Is there a particular piece of your beliefs/tradition that you enjoy or appreciate most of all?

For me it's the love I feel from my gods. I've been close to a few and, I personally, feel their presence with me which is someone that truly makes appreciate my faith more. As I build my altar for Heimdall more I feel more and more connected to him.

What holidays do you celebrate each year?

I don't really celebrate holidays, it's never been something I've ever done in my life even as a kid. Now I read about each holiday as it happens as TAC puts up information about the holidays whenever they happen. But I'm also now starting to put things together so I can celebrate them with my kids, if they want to as I don't force my faith onto my children.

Were you ever "In the Broom Closet"? What was your experience, and if you've "come out" since then, what was that like?

Thankfully no. But when I first started properly following Asatru my mum worried for me, thinking I'd only done it because of my ex. Once she realised that yes he introduced me to Asatru I didn't follow because of him but because of my own faith in it she was fine.

What would you recommend to someone who's just beginning down this path?

Research and be careful of groups when you first join them. Many groups that label themselves as Asatru are racist.

And trust yourself you don't have to follow it exactly do what feels right for you, there is no right or wrong way to follow.

What are some resources you've found that you'd recommend to others? Books, articles...

The Asatru Community website has heaps of articles about all different things pertaining to Asatru, many of the groups have lots of great information as well, though most groups are charter member only groups but it's free to become a member.

Also a few books I love are Asatru for beginners by Mathias Nordvig, the gods own country by Dan coultras and heathens of Yorkshire, the Poetic Edda I enjoy Crawford's translation, the havamal which also has many translations and the voluspa.



Hyde indicated to us that they're more than happy to discuss this interview or Ásatrú with anyone who wanted to get in touch with them by email:

HydeA@theasatrucommunity.org

The Lounge

For the adults and the parents in the room

Pagan Parenting

Religion and magic beyond the teen years



So they have left the teen years and flown the coop, taking flight into a life and world that is completely theirs to direct and that's it for you, right? We wave them goodbye, wish them well? While it's mostly true, from now on in the spiritual life of your kids (as with the other areas) you should be in the backseat. It's their life, and decisions are on them from now on, but that doesn't mean the parenting is over. I don't have adult kids myself so I can't write from that experience. What I can do is write as an adult about my parents involvement in my spiritual life and speculate about the future with my own kids when they grow up.

My kids are only young but its something that is not uncommon for me to see already. Parents worried about their kids behaviour or future behaviour because of their own actions or stereotypes failing to empathise with where their kids/teens/adults are at. To paraphrase Dumbledore from Harry Potter (showing my generation), the young can't know how age thinks and feels but adults are guilty if they forget what it was to be young. If you're wondering how to move forward in a situation with your adult kid then remember how you were at their age and how you might have reacted to your parent's interference. The gift of getting older is you can remember that feeling. But with the benefit of hindsight, you can say what you would have preferred your parent did or didn't do. And how would your parent's actions have been received.

Its true in almost all cases and many areas of life that at some time your kid will need advice from you. In the realm of spirituality it's possible that your kid will come to you, faith shaken from life events, expanded views from what you raised them with, completely lost and wounded and that you'll have it asked of you, just like when they were young: What do I do? What do I believe? And much like a councillor your job isn't to tell them but to make suggestions, help them ask themselves questions and find the answer that suits them. And if they are too overwhelmed, too exhausted, too beaten to do that then the job is just to support them until they can do it.

Talking Spirituality

As an adult with parents who are still alive, and as a parent myself, I feel it's still really import to keep the lines of communication with your adult children open. While it may not be an option for everyone I feel it brings families closer and can result in more tolerance and respect for "odd" practices as family members are aware of why they are being done. There is obviously no need for pushing on religious fronts from any family members but open discussion is useful.



If you and your family members share a spiritual path it can be a wonderful bonding experience to share the special events and celebrations together, whether it is a continuation from your early years as a family or a new event you celebrate together. Even those with different faiths can be a part of important celebrations. This is something many pagans who still do Christmas with their families may be familiar with and it can go the other way. Involving each other in spiritual celebrations can also help to erase harmful stereotypes of different faiths, which can help family units and mean you as a parent are more likely to be involved in spiritual life when your kids have children of their own (if they decide to). As with when your kids were growing up, when they are adults continue to show an interest in their lives and their spirituality without being controlling or condescending.



What about magic now?

Now that they are adults it's still true that they have total autonomy over this part of their lives. However, magic (assuming they want your input) is an area that can really grow between child and parent. Having previously covered how intent is so important in magic, and having matured enough to fully understand all the implications of the actions and reactions of that intent, you can, as a parent and as a guide, begin

to fully explore the depths of magic work with your children and discuss theories and ideas that may have previously been difficult for them to fully comprehend. For example, magic and its effects through our world and the multiverse, how the existence of string theory might effect their magic workings, astral projection and energy work across space and time, interacting with ancestors and spirits on a deeper level, safety in all these spaces and in group work, and red flags in people, groups and practices to be aware of. Just remember as a parent not to overstep your boundaries as these things are their choice. Revel in the person your child has become and enjoy the rest of the ride.

See you next time!

The Kitchen

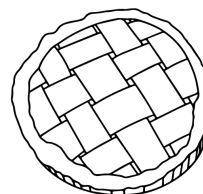
Recipes for the season

Apple Hand Pies

A yummy snack or prelude to a feast. We enjoy making funky tops for them to fit the season. You can make them any shape and size but an ideal size is 8-10cm as they fit in the hand but can still fit a fair amount of filling. We used a large cookie cutter for the bottom and a very large one for the tops.

Ingredients

- *Short crust pastry, home made or store bought
- *3 medium to large apples, cored and diced small
- *1/3 cup of brown sugar
- *50g butter
- *1½ teaspoons of ground cinnamon
- *½ teaspoon ground nutmeg
- *½ teaspoon ground allspice
- *Egg wash (1 egg and 1 tablespoon of milk beaten together)



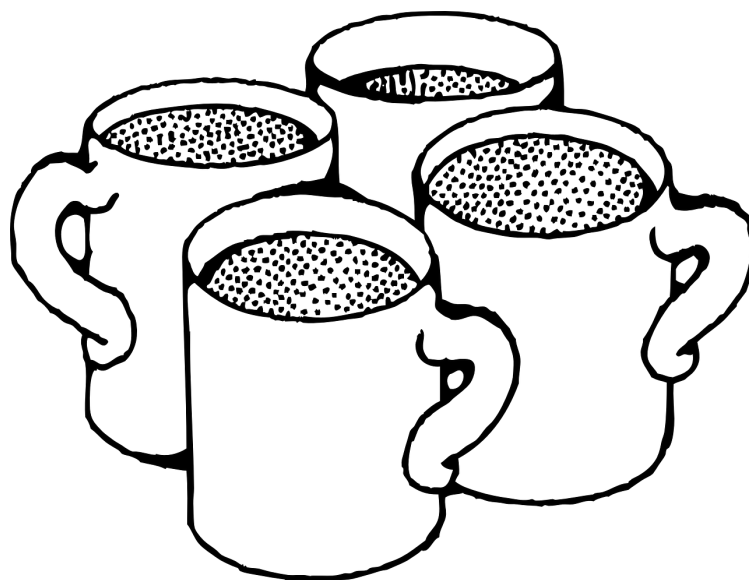
Method

1. Combine the apples, sugar, butter and spices in a pan over a medium heat and stir while it comes to a simmer
2. Allow to simmer for 2-4 mins, remove from heat and allow to cool.
3. Cut out your pie bases and tops, use leftover pastry to cut out other shapes to decorate the tops.
4. Preheat the oven to 180 degrees and line baking trays with baking paper. Lay out your bases.
5. Add pie filling on top of the bases, leaving the edge clear then cover with the tops and crimp the edges of the pies to seal. Cut vents into the tops for steam to escape and decorate as desired. Brush with egg wash.
6. Bake in the oven for 20 mins or until they are golden brown, remove and cool for 5 mins before placing on a cooling rack. Serve warm or allow to cool completely.

Enjoy!

Defuxe Hot Chocolate

This hot chocolate is European style decadence and very, very rich. An adaption of a recipe which we found so long ago we no longer know where it's from. It is perfect for cold days, snow trips and warm fires and is a hit with all age groups. Its so heavy on the chocolate that if you can try and get decent quality, you can tell the difference. This makes approximately 600ml.



Ingredients

- *1 ½ cups of full cream milk
- *½ cup of cream
- *240g of dark chocolate roughly chopped
- *Sweetener to taste (we don't usually use any but it is bittersweet)
- *Whipped cream to serve.

Method

1. In a saucepan over medium heat mix together the milk, cream and sweetener (a whisk works well for this) until small bubbles appear at the edge.
2. Remove from heat and mix in all the chocolate, stir until completely melted, you can reheat over low if you need the extra heat to melt the chocolate. Serve warm (or put in a warm slow cooker for large batches) and top with whipped cream.

Enjoy!

Cider Pork

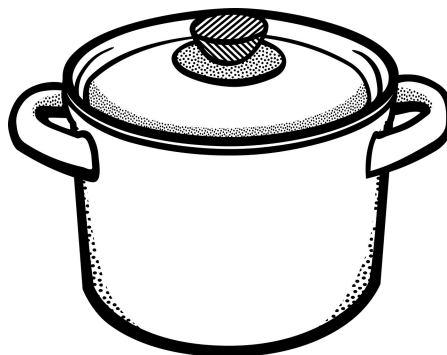
This was originally a recipe from a slow cooking book but has gone through several iterations to end up here as is. This version is a family favourite.

Ingredients

- *1 kg Pork, diced
- *4 carrots, diced
- *2 leeks, sliced
- *200 ml dry cider
- *150 ml cream
- *1.5 L of pork or chicken stock
- *2 tablespoons of flour
- *1 bay leaf
- *Salt and Pepper to taste

Method

1. Toss the diced pork in the flour, salt, pepper and bay leaf, sear the meat in a pan, then throw in a slow cooker or pot on the stove.
2. Cook the carrots and leeks until softened in the pan then put in the pot, deglaze the pan with the cider and pour in the pot along with the stock.
3. Cook on a medium heat for 1 hour if on the stove (stirring to make sure nothing sticks) or in a slow cooker on high for 6 hours.
4. Add cream and continue to cook for a further 10mins on low before serving with warm, crusty, buttery bread



Enjoy!

The Session Room

Here you'll find song, story and poem

Witches Jingle Bells (to the tune of Jingle Bells)

Lyrics by the Holly

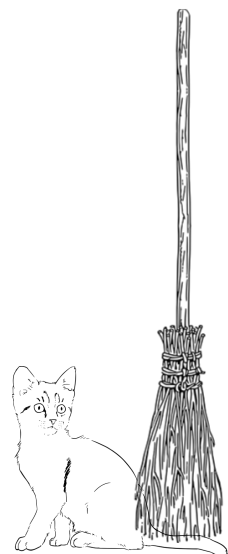


Dashing through the snow
With my cauldron and my broom
Over the fields we go
Laughing its a boon
Bells on broom tails ring
Making ancestors smile
What joy it brings to ride and sing
And while away the miles

Oh jingle bells, jingle bells, jingle all the way
Oh what fun it is to ride on our brooms this winters day hey
Oh jingle bells, jingle bells, jingle all the way
Oh what fun it is to ride on our brooms this winters day hey

When Yuletide came about
We took our brooms to the sky
Left the cats to guard the house
And they watched us with a sigh
Through this winter long
We will dance 'round the fire strong
And joyfully sing the song
Right here where we belong

Oh jingle bells, jingle bells, jingle all the way
Oh what fun it is to ride on our brooms this winters day hey
Oh jingle bells, jingle bells, jingle all the way
Oh what fun it is to ride on our brooms this winters day hey!





Imbolc

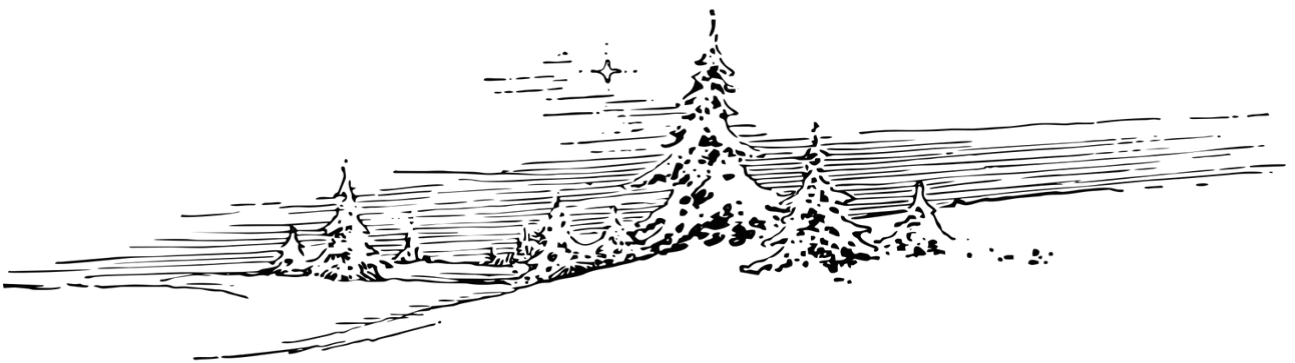
By Damh the Bard

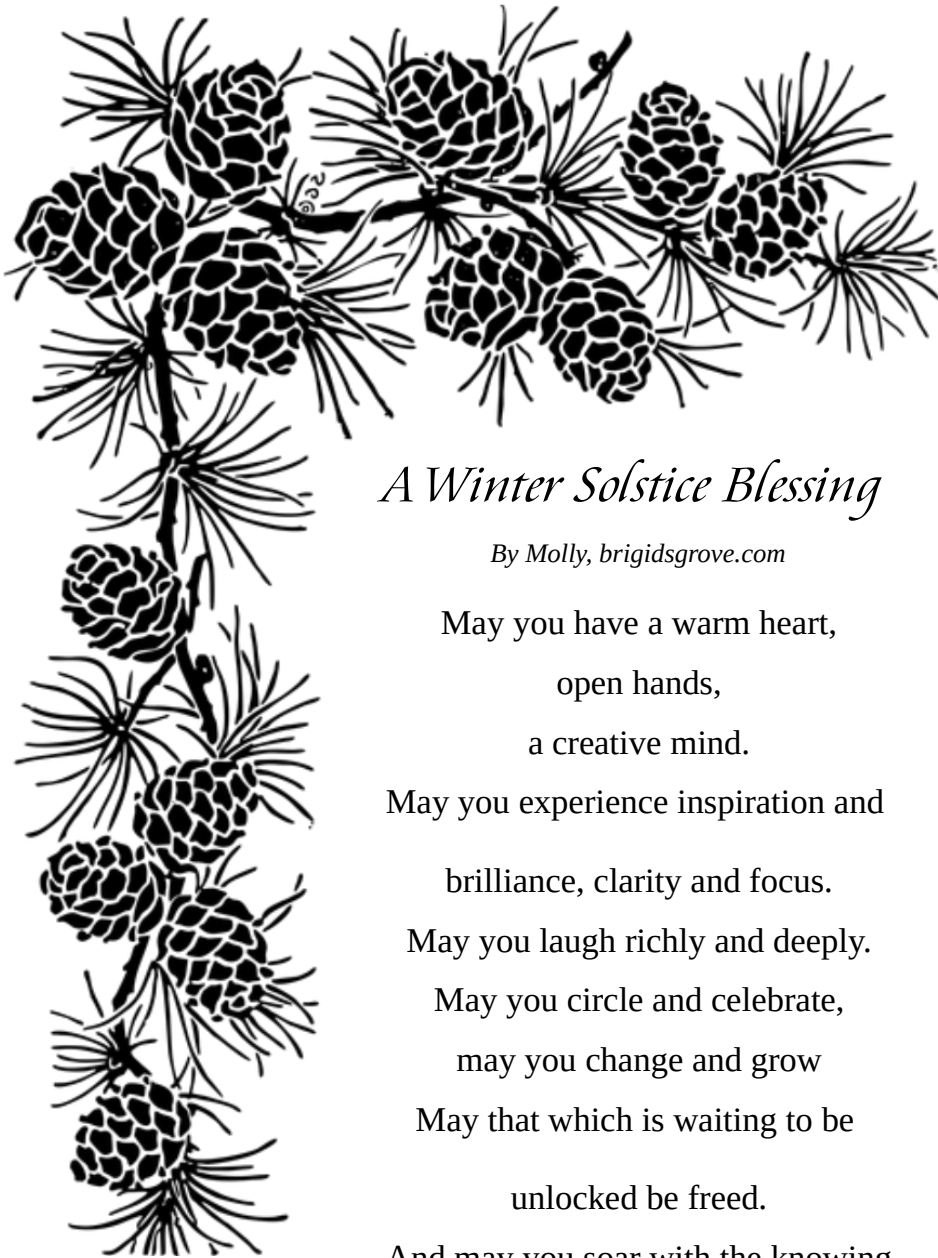
As the dark, cold morning gives way to light,
And the world shows its face dazzling in her nakedness,
So the twigs and leaf-bare branches,
Bow to the passing dance
Of old Jack Frost.

His crystal breath on the earth,
And the corners of houses weep icicles of joy.
But where is the Sun's warmth?
Where is life?

A small flower, delicate and pure-white,
Looks to the earth,
As if talking to the waiting green,
"Not yet," it seems to whisper.
"When I fall, then you can return."

And she nods her head,
as the Lady passes by,
Leaving more flowers in Her wake.





A Winter Solstice Blessing

By Molly, brigidsgrove.com

May you have a warm heart,
open hands,
a creative mind.

May you experience inspiration and

brilliance, clarity and focus.

May you laugh richly and deeply.

May you circle and celebrate,
may you change and grow

May that which is waiting to be
unlocked be freed.

And may you soar with the knowing
that you are carried by a great wind
across the sky.



The Table

Seasonal craft activities for the family

Decorated Pine Cones

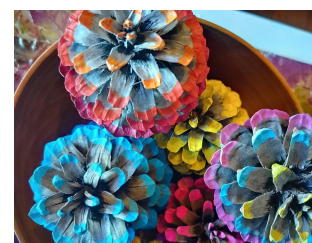
These are an easy kid craft that look fantastic scattered throughout the house and on window sills. If you collect your pine cones from the wild make sure you prep your pine cones for craft use by baking them in the oven for 30 mins between 60 to 80 degrees, this will get rid of any fungi or bacteria that are in the cones which will then make sure it doesn't spread to your house.

Tip Painted Colour

To make:

*Acrylic paint

On the edges of each segment of the pine cones you will see two slightly flatter parts that form an arrow shape, it's this small part we want to paint to get the effect. Using a thin layer paint the arrow shape or as many segments as you can (there will be some you can't reach at the bottom) and allow to dry. Apply a second layer if desired. You can paint them as solid, gradient or rainbow colours. They all look great.



Frosted and Snowy

To make:

*Clear drying liquid glue

*Fake snow (such as a bicarb snow)

Using a thin layer of glue paint the segments you wish to be snowy, this can just be the tips for a frosty look or the whole length of the segment for a heavily snowed look. Working quick to make sure the glue is still wet, sprinkle the snow heavily onto the glue and then shake off the excess. Set aside and let dry.

Make Bicarb snow by mixing 1 cup of bicarb with 1 tablespoon of water at a time until the right snow-like consistency is reached,

Mica Shine

To make:

*synthetic mica

*clear drying liquid glue

Mix a ¼ teaspoon of mica and 1 tablespoon glue together and then working quickly paint the glue onto the sections you wish to colour, we did the whole segment length. Let dry.



Evergreen Gnomes

These gnomes are awesome seasonal additions to your front door and a great way to make use of any pine tree left overs if you have them. These ones have pine cone noses and caps made from felt off-cuts, but get creative and see what you have lying around.

To make:

- *Pine, cypress or fir branches and tips
- *Florist wire or string
- * A nose such as a pine cone or potato
- *Something for a cap, fabric or moss or an old sock
- *Base such as a container or overturned pot with a hole in it
- *A stick to form the attachment point

Put the stick through the container/pot making sure the stick won't make the base unstable. Cut the branches and tips so they reach from the bottom of the container to 2/3 up the stick.

Take 1/3rd of the branches and arrange them around the stick so they touch the ground, using the wire or string wrap around the branches tightly to tie them in place.

Repeat with the remaining 2/3rds of the branches in two layers wrapping each layer in place and filling in the gaps until you cant see the container.

Tie on the nose just below the point where the branches have been tied.

Make the cap, here we used a wide cone shape then stitched it together along one side turning it the right way around afterwards.

Place your cap on your gnome just covering the top of the nose and place them at your door to greet your visitors through the season.



DIY Dipped Beeswax Candles

Labour-intensive but well worth the effort, these are not only a fun family activity when you're stuck inside with the winter weather but can then be used for practical or spiritual purposes later.

To make:

- *Beeswax, at least 200g
- * Square cotton wick suitable for candle thickness you'll end up with
- *Wire for holding the wick
- *Metal container for melting the beeswax, preferably something thin and tall for ease of use
- *Pot of water
- *Sharp knife



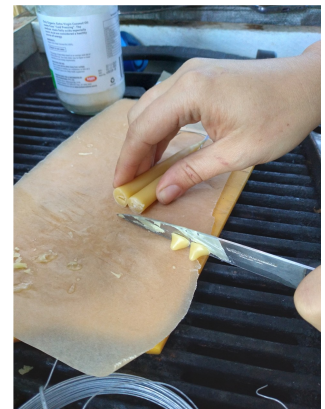
Shape the wire into two loops so you can make 2 candles at once that will be held apart.

Heat the water in the pot and place the container full of beeswax in the pot of water so the wax will melt. Bring the water to a boil then reduce to a simmer.

Once melted, cut the wick 2 times the length you want your candles plus 3-4cm. Hang the wick on the wire so it is even and dip almost all the way into the wax (don't put the wire in) and leave there until the wick stops bubbling then put out

and allow to cool for 30-60 seconds. Gently roll the wick on a flat surface to straiten.

Dip the wicks again quickly so the first layer of wax doesn't melt off and let cool for 30-60 seconds (dunking the wicks in cold water will speed up the cooling time). Repeat this step until the candle is the desired thickness.



Cut the bottom of the candles so they are the length of the wick inside and flat across the bottom then do a final dip to seal the ends.

Hang up to let cool completely. Once cool cut the wicks to be 1cm longer than the candles.

Ready for use!

